



### 3.0 ESTERBROOK PROPER



#### 3.1 Area Description

Number of Points: 6 (174-178, 270)

Number of Structures: 20

BLM Ownership: 240

The area consists of 200 acres of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) surrounded by two subdivisions. There are good roads traversing west to east and secondary logging roads, in poor condition, running north to south. Several skid trails crisscross the unit. Due to a mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) infestation in the 1980's, salvage and preventative thinning is widespread throughout the unit. A substantial amount of logging slash is found throughout the area, particularly 1000-hr fuels less than 8 inches in diameter. One hundred foot corridors along the primary roads have been salvaged on either side. There are heavier fuel loads beyond 100 feet. Thinning, particularly in the north, has left a heavy fuel load from lop-and-scatter treatments. Slash depth is generally less than 18 inches and is showing signs of decomposition.



The eastern edge of the unit is composed of post and pole size ponderosa pine that has been thinned to approximately 680 stems per acre. The forest floor is predominately western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*) and Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), with common juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and Oregon grape (*Mohonia repens*). Ponderosa pine regeneration is approximately 400 seedlings per acre.

An isolated 40-acre block is one-half mile south and adjacent to a steep drainage. Vegetation consists primarily of ponderosa pine, frequented by rocky outcrops.

### 3.2 Management Recommendations

The Esterbrook unit offers a unique opportunity for the BLM, in cooperation with the Forest Service and State, to (1) demonstrate to homeowners how to develop defensible space around their residences, to (2) develop a series of treatments to reduce the risk of a wildfire impacting the community, and (3) promote ecosystem health of a unique section of BLM land. Due to the recent Hensel Fire, it behooves managers to begin work on this project immediately.

1. *Public Outreach and Education.* Inform homeowners of the BLM's intent to reduce the heavy fuel load and increase ecosystem health of the unit through public meetings, brochures, and implementation of fuel treatment techniques.
2. *Fuel Wood.* Fuel wood permits, pre-commercial thinning, and post-and-pole harvesting is recommended in certain locations to reduce the fuel loading, fragment the horizontal continuity of the canopy, and increase the health of the stand.
3. *Reduce Ladder Fuels.* Limbing of ladder fuels and developing shaded fuel breaks near private land will restrict transitions from the surface to aerial fuels and modify crown fire advances.
4. *Pile and Burn.* Hand or mechanical piling of the slash and burning in early winter will reduce the heavy fuel load, promote ecosystem health, and prepare the area for broadcast burning.



5. *Aspen Regeneration*. Promote aspen regeneration by burning, tree removal, or mechanical stimulation. Develop and expand the natural aspen fuel break located centrally along the east-west drainage of the unit.
6. *Broadcast Burn*. Broadcast burn employing a series of low intensity surface fires distributed judiciously throughout the unit utilizing roads, skid trails, and wet lines as temporary fuel breaks. Prioritize areas based on ease of burning (e.g., minimal site prep, ample fire breaks), greatest likelihood of success, possible impacts to structures or public (e.g., escape fire, smoke), occurrence of aspen, condition and composition of the understory, etc.
7. *Timber Harvest*. Areas can undergo timber harvest to lower basal area measurements and decrease the threat of crown fire. Harvest to no less than a 60 basal area to insure an adequate overstory to inhibit excessive regeneration of pine. Use a whole tree yarding system, creating landings in large openings where slash piles can be burned without threatening surrounding trees. Piles should be ten to twenty feet in height and have a diameter of twenty to thirty feet. Burn piles two years after harvest while red needles remain on piled slash. This will aid in obtaining a “complete” consumption of fuel.

### 3.3 Esterbrook Proper Hazard Assessment Rating

<u>Total Rating Score</u>	<u>Hazard Level</u>	<u>Amount (%)</u>
1-14	Low	0
15-21	Moderate	0
21-28	High	86
29-35	Extreme	14